

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DIFFICULTIES IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM AND OTHER NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Background and Objective

Neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) are often comorbid with behavioural difficulties. This study describes such behaviours in a sample of South African children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other NDDs.

Methods

This study was embedded in the *NeuroDev Study*¹. Parents of 957 children aged 2-17 years ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 3.15$; 75% male) with NDDs completed the CBCL^{2,3}.

We compared scores on the DSM-Oriented Scales in younger (2-5 years, $n = 512$) and older (6-17 years, $n = 444$) children by diagnosis (ASD compared to other NDDs).

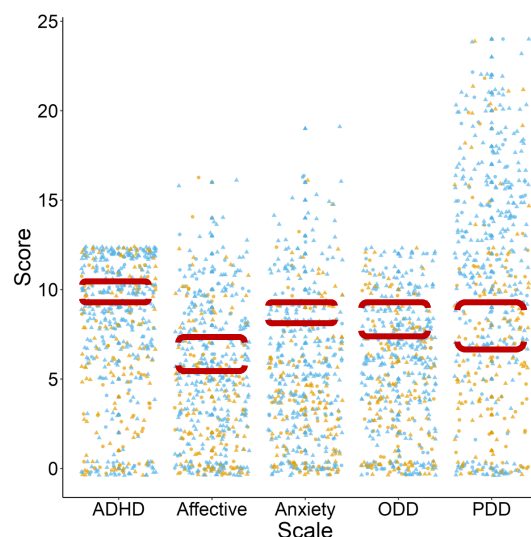
Results

In the younger group, children with ASD (67%) obtained higher average scores (more difficulties) in the Affective, Anxiety, ADHD, and ODD subscales than those with other NDDs ($p < .001$).

61% of young children with ASD scored in the “clinical range” in at least one diagnostic scale, compared to 42% in the non-ASD group.

In the older group, there were no group differences in average scale scores. The proportion of children with NDDs who scored in the clinical range for at least one diagnostic scale, did not differ by diagnosis (56% and 59% for ASD and non-ASD groups respectively).

Figure 1. DSM-Oriented Scale Scores for children aged 2-5 with NDDs ($n = 512$)



Sex

- Female
- ▲ Male

Diagnosis

- Non-ASD
- ASD

Borderline clinical range

References →

Please scan to view references.

Conclusions

Emotional and behavioural difficulties are prevalent in South African children living with NDDs. Differences in behavioural phenotypic profiles by age and diagnosis may help inform targeted screening tools and interventions.

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